(b) The State Government has been requested to extend all necessary infrastructural support for the project and Central Public Works Department has been asked to implement the project expeditiously.

Promotion of Eco-Tourism

741. SHRI SURENDRA LATH: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal to introduce a country-wide programme to promote Eco-tourism;

(b) if so, by when the programme would be implemented;

(c) whether any State has taken any step in this regard with the assistance of Government;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the programme drawn up by Government in this regard for 2003-04?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) and (b) The Government have announced a National Tourism Policy in the year 2002 wherein greater emphasis has been laid on promotion of eco-tourism whose parameters have been made broader than those of nature tourism. Eco-tourism must help in eliminating poverty, in ending unemployment, in creating new skills, in enhancing the status of women, in preserving cultural heritage, in encouraging tribal and local crafts and in improving overall environment and facilitating growth of a more just and fair social order.

The Government have also set up a National Committee on Eco-tourism and Mountains to work out details for managing the fragile Eco-system and to consider projects/programmes for development of Eco-tourism in the country.

(c) and (d) Some of the State Governments like Sikkim, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra have implemented unique Eco-tourism projects in their States with assistance from Central Department of Tourism.

(e) The Eco-tourism projects as and when received from the State Governments will be considered on their merits, *inter-se* priority and availability of funds.

Removal of encroachments from monuments and tourist spots

742. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to stop funds to those States which failed to remove encroachments from monuments and places of tourist interest;

(b) if so, whether Government have also directed the State Governments to send implementation reports of removing such encroachments;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) by when all the encroachments from monuments and places of tourist are likely to be removed?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) to (d) Ministry of Tourism & Culture have been requesting the State Governments/UT Administrations to check further encroachments and to set up an effective agency to remove the existing encroachments at monuments. During the State Tourism Ministers Conference held on 5.9.2002 the State Governments were also requested to ensure that encroachements should not come up in the vicinity of heritage sites as it creates adverse image in the mind of visitors. In the New Tourism Policy thrust has been given to the civilisational issues as well as issues pertaining to civic and good governance. In major tourism projects the State Governments are being requested for relocation of the encroachments.

Outstanding dues of NDMC to Hotel Ashok of India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC)

743. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India Tourism Development Corporation owned Hotel Ashok owes New Delhi Municipal Council Rs. 18.75 crores;

(b) if so, whether NDMC has sent notice to the hotel for payment otherwise water connection in the hotel would be snapped; and